Denis Dyomkin
Ex-Reuters Senior Correspondent | Eurasia & Beyond | Eyewitness Archive
3yr • Edited •

RIP, Михаил Сергеевич. About ten years ago, the last leader of the USSR was forced to deny false reports of his death. Sadly, that's not the case today, and the legendary statesman is now history, for which his role was crucial. Gorby had perhaps outlived all the world leaders, from Reagan ("Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall") to Thatcher to Mitterand to Kohl, who witnessed - and supported - the young (by Politburo standards) reformer who ended the Cold War and paved the way to freedom and prosperity for many European nations occupied by the "Evil Empire."

The Reuters obituary by David Ljunggren, which I share here, offers a thoughtful overview of Gorbachev's geopolitical glories and failures. And I vividly recall the moving 1999 interview by then-Reuters Moscow bureau chief Martin Nesirky, who displayed the former world leader as a human figure, revealing to the world an elderly widower devastated by the tragic loss of his beloved wife. Raisa Gorbacheva, who died of leukemia at age 67, was the USSR's first (and only) glamorous first lady - attractive, wise and influential.

Like many ex-Soviet Russians of my generation, I am grateful for the freedoms and open borders he brought us, though probably without meaning to. I can't help but recall that I've felt a special kinship with Gorby twice in my lifetime. First, through my now-late father. As a journalist for a national Soviet newspaper on a reporting trip to the agricultural region at the foothills of the Caucasus in the 1970s, it turned out that he was assisted and accompanied by Gorbachev, who was then a local apparatchik heading the Stavropol regional administration.

And secondly, I had the honour of shaking Gorby's hand - broad, warm, and firm - during our brief conversation in the Kremlin in June 2012, at the reception following Putin's "inauguration" to his eternal "presidency." Who has slowly but surely rolled back all those liberties and democratic gains for which the world was grateful to the late Soviet president.

Later, Gorbachev would be harshly criticized for his situational alliances with the Kremlin and for his support of the annexation of Crimea (for which Ukraine banned Gorbachev from entering the country). Still, long before that, Gorby had warned Russians against the rise of Stalinism and worried that his country was forgetting its tragic past.

In his brief interview with me in 2012, the first and last president of the USSR was appealing to Putin to "correct the error," meaning the newly passed draconian laws that de facto banned freedom of assembly in Russia. Of course, this appeal was ignored: Putin only doubled down on his crackdown on dissent and went further by brutally invading Ukraine. But I can't blame Gorbachev for that.

https://lnkd.in/g-Dah3eE

#Gorbachev
#fieldmemoirs
#Historical_Journalism

* Posted before joining GAC

Last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who ended the Cold War, dies aged 91
reuters.com

Denis Dyomkin Author

Ex-Reuters Senior Correspondent | Eurasia & Beyond | Eyewitness Archive
4mo
Gorbachev died shocked and bewildered by war with Ukraine, his interpreter who worked with the late Soviet president for 37 years revealed soon after. He spoke with Gorby on the phone a few weeks prior and said that he was struck by how traumatized the latter was by the events. "Visibly angered by criticism of Gorbachev since his death

by some people on social media" whom he called "haters", Palazhchenko told Andrew Osborn in an interview that his former employer thought history would judge him rightly. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/gorbachev-died-shocked-bewildered-by-ukraine-conflict-interpreter-2022-09-01/

Gorbachev died shocked and bewildered by Ukraine conflict - interpreter

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, was shocked and bewildered by the Ukraine conflict in the months before he died and psychologically crushed in recent years by Moscow's worsening ties with Kyiv, his interpreter said on Thursday.

Denis Dyomkin Author

Ex-Reuters Senior Correspondent | Eurasia & Beyond | Eyewitness Archive
(edited)4mo
This November 2011 Reuters footage offers a fascinating and crucial glimpse into Russia's political landscape during an unprecedented moment that, in fact, has never repeated since then. As Navalny galvanized the first massive anti-Kremlin street protests since the 1990s and the government moved to appease the street demands, Gorbachev here is exposing Putin’s fears of slipping popularity and his reliance on corrupt security forces. It's a period when, though formally Medvedev’s subordinate, it was clear Putin still called the shots. However, many still clung to hopes he would honour (haha) his promises and step aside.

Here, Gorby explains, in plain Russian, that Putin just genuinely fears losing power. “But so that one doesn’t have to be afraid, democracy exists,” Gorby wisely advises Yeltsin’s successor… and the successor to Yeltsin’s successor. 2011. Alas. GERMANY: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev says Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev should leave politics and give way to a new generation - https://reuters.screenocean.com/record/595597

GERMANY: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev says Russian Prime Minister V
should leave politics and give way to a new generation

Record ID: 595597

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144 impressions

Felix Schaefer • 3rd+

Consultant / Felix Schaefer Marktforschung

9mo

May I arouse your interest in a book of my husband: https://www.jetztzeit-verlag.de

jetztzeit verlag

erzählte Geschichte, Gorbatschow, Genscher, Bartoszewski, Noah Flug, Auschwitz

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1

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1 Comment on Felix Schaefer’s comment

Denis Dyomkin Author

Ex-Reuters Senior Correspondent | Eurasia & Beyond | Eyewitness Archive

5mo

Felix Schaefer thanks for sharing - looking forward to reading it.

https://stabi-hb.de/en/termine/bettina-schaefer-hrsg-michail-gorbatschow-wie-er-unser-leben-veraenderte-eine-buchvorstellung-mit-zeitzeuginnen-dr-henning-scherf-sonja-eichwede-ruslan/

Bettina Schaefer (ed.): "Michail Gorbachev - how he changed our lives" - book presentation - Stadtbibliothek Bremen

Bettina Schaefer (ed.): “Mikhail Gorbachev – How he changed our lives” – book presentation

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Nicholas Sims • 1st

Freelance Illustrator specialising in portraits

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But, yes, some Russians I spoke to thought what he had done was unforgivable- the break up of the USSR. It was difficult to persuade them of 'our' angle. Russia seemed to lose and gain nothing in return for reducing her arsenal.

Like

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Nicholas Sims • 1st

Freelance Illustrator specialising in portraits

3y

Yeah, a hero. A great statesman of the world. A peace-maker. Sanity in opposition to MAD.

Love

1

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Denis Dyomkin Author

Ex-Reuters Senior Correspondent | Eurasia & Beyond | Eyewitness Archive

3y

My 2012 story (in Russian), based on a brief talk with Gorby:
https://www.reuters.com/article/orutp-russia-gorby-protests-idRUMSE85B00D20120612

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3 Replies on Denis Dyomkin’s comment
190 impressions

Martin Nesirky • 1st

Former United Nations official
3y
Thank you for your kind words about that interview piece, Denis. I was thinking about it as the news came in yesterday. Somehow I don’t have a copy of the story so if friends still at Reuters could dig it out and post it in this thread it would be great.
Love

1
Reply

Denis Dyomkin Author

Ex-Reuters Senior Correspondent | Eurasia & Beyond | Eyewitness Archive
3mo
Martin Nesirky, the Reuters Archives has kindly made this available (thanks go to them)! Due to its length, the entire piece couldn't be squeezed into the comment, but here is the first para and a link to the full version in MS Word format on the Internet Archive:

INTERVIEW - Grieving Gorbachev dreams of Raisa.
MOSCOW, Oct 20 (Reuters) - Mikhail Gorbachev still dreams vividly about his wife Raisa and is finding it hard to get back down to work after her death.
"Suddenly last night the phone rang," the 68-year-old former Soviet leader told Reuters in his first interview since Raisa's much-watched Moscow funeral last month.
"I lifted the receiver and I heard 'Hi'. It was Raisa phoning. I said to her, 'Where are you calling from?' And then the conversation ended. I woke up."

Gorbachev, moist-eyed and melancholy when speaking about his wife yet dynamic when he switches to other subjects, said his daughter Irina, a doctor, and her two daughters had moved into his dacha country house to support him.
An aide said Irina was arranging for the dacha to be partly redecorated to give Gorbachev a boost.
https://archive.org/details/gorbachev-nesirky-reuters-interview-1999

Gorbachev Reuters Interview 1999 : Martin Nesirky : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

In his first interview since his wife Raisa's death, Mikhail Gorbachev shared to Reuters Moscow bureau chief Martin Nesirky how deeply he grieved for her,...

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79 impressions

Martin Nesirky • 1st

Former United Nations official
3mo
Thank you so much Denis. I remember that interview vividly. Hard to believe it was a quarter of a century ago! I really appreciate that you sent this and the link. The Reuters archive is fabulous.
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1
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Reuters

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Горбачев советует Путину "исправить ошибку" со штрафами за митинги

By **Reuters**

June 12, 2012 8:44 AM EDT · Updated 1 min ago

Aa

Михаил Горбачев и Владимир Путин на приеме в Кремле в честь Дня России 12 июня 2002 года. Через 10 лет на таком же приеме первый и последний президент СССР Горбачёв призвал "исправить ошибку" вернувшегося в Кремль российского лидера Путина, который взвинтил штрафы за стихийные собрания граждан вопреки критикам, назвавшим поправки... Purchase Licensing Rights **Read more**

Денис Дёмкин

МОСКВА (Рейтер) - Первый и последний президент СССР Михаил Горбачёв призвал "исправить ошибку" вернувшегося в Кремль российского лидера Владимира Путина, который взвинтил штрафы за стихийные собрания граждан вопреки критикам, назвавшим поправки антиконституционным инструментом подавления инакомыслия.

"Это - ошибка", - сказал Горбачёв Рейтер.

"Придется исправлять ее, не откладывая. Самое лучшее - если президент сам это сделает".

Путин подписал закон о штрафах размером с годовую зарплату среднего россиянина за несколько дней до уличной акции, вопреки предостережениям собственного советника по правам человека, который указал принявшему документ в пожарном порядке парламенту на расхождения с Конституцией, трудовым законодательством и международными обязательствами России.

Горбачёв, которому 81, в понедельник прибыл в Кремль на торжественный прием по случаю Дня России, который совпал с очередной акцией протеста против Путина, собравшей в столице десятки тысяч недовольных.

Накануне следователи с ОМОНом обыскали квартиры Алексея Навального и других организаторов протестных акций и их родителей. Оппозиция сочла 12-часовой обыск с изъятием телефонов, компьютеров и денег акцией устрашения и очередным свидетельством закручивания гаек после возвращения Путина в Кремль.

Госдепартамент США заявил, что "глубоко озабочен очевидным притеснением фигур российской политической оппозиции". По мнению Вашингтона, обыски, вызовы на допрос и увеличение штрафов "поднимают серьезные вопросы относительно произвольного использование силовых структур для удушения свободы слова и свободы собраний" в России.

Архитектор перестройки Горбачев спонсировал оппозиционную "Новую газету" и советовал Путину не возвращаться в президенты, назвав его неомонархом, а ситуацию в стране сравнивал с застоем времен Леонида Брежнева.

Путин в речи на торжественном обеде в честь государственного праздника в Кремле назвал "жаркие дискуссии" нормой "для свободной демократической страны" и привычно предостерег от "любых решений и шагов, способных обернуться социальными и экономическими потрясениями".

Президент, чьи выборы западные наблюдатели и оппозиция сочли нечестными, пообещал модернизировать экономику и политическую систему, "опираясь при этом на накопленный потенциал стабильности."

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